

TAX RATABLES.

HOW CAN THEY BE INCREASED OUTSIDE OF ARBITRARY METHODS.

A Problem Discussed by a Sub-Committee of the Board of Trade—Bloomfield's Slow Growth in Taxable Valuations Commented On—Another Experiment to be Tried.

The Press Committee of the Board of Trade at a recent meeting discussed a matter of vital interest to the material welfare of this town. Broadly stated, the problem to which the Press Committee devoted an evening's talk was "how to increase the tax ratables of Bloomfield." Various theories have been propounded from time to time in solution of this problem. Some people have argued that a practical answer to the question was the introduction and extension of public improvements.

Years ago when a public water supply was introduced optimistic predictions were plentiful to the effect that if it was made known to the outside world that Bloomfield possessed a public water supply system, there would be a great rush of home seekers here from New York, and the investment would repay the town many fold in the increase of tax ratables that would be brought about. The water came but failed to bring with it a flood of home seekers. The tide of migration continued to flow from New York to East Orange and Montclair, and Bloomfield caught an occasional stray one.

To dispel the gloom that had settled over the town owing to its slow growth in taxable wealth compared with its neighbors, it was proposed to put forth an additional attraction by illuminating the town with electric lights. This was a step in advance of both East Orange and Montclair, and was predicted that the enterprise shown in this move would of itself attract attention to the town and remove the reproach of slowness from which it had suffered for years. Electric lights, both arc and incandescent, flared from many poles, but the seekers of country homes were not attracted by the glare and no appreciable share of the taxable wealth was discernible.

The next public advertisement tried was sewerage. Good sanitation added to good water and bright light, it was claimed, would make an irresistible drawing card, and as a matter of public investment the sewer system would prove an inestimable boon. The sewer system was constructed, the town's liabilities were enormously increased, also the tax rate, but only a feeble effect followed in the increase of tax ratables. But those who contended that the best way to increase the wealth of the town was by a manifestation of progressiveness were not discouraged. To water, light and sewerage it was resolved to add good roads. Bonds were issued for an extensive plan of street improvements. The town's liabilities were again largely increased and the tax rate climbed several points higher, but tax ratables refused to respond to the stimulus, and the town could not be violently lifted from the rut of slow and steady progress which had characterized its past history.

Even a change in the form of government and the erection of several public school buildings that are second to none in the State in appearance and equipment, and in educational work, have failed to bring about the desired effect, and public liabilities have continued to increase out of all proportion with public assets, and the consequence is a burdensome tax rate. Thus far the advocates of a progressive spirit that shows itself in extensive public improvements have had their way, and as yet the returns have not been satisfactory, and the question of how to bring about a strong and healthful increase in the tax ratables is still a vital question.

Good water, well-lighted streets, sewerage, good roads and unexcelled public school facilities can be honestly placed on the advertising card, but the goods in some way fail to attract the right buyers.

Alongside of those who have maintained that the right answer to the query of how to increase taxable wealth was by pushing improvements are those who have contended that attention ought to be mainly centred on the town's industrial advantages, that factories ought to be encouraged on the ground that they bring people here and the people build houses and thus add largely to the local wealth. It cannot be denied but what the advocates of the industrial theory have had an tonic. Several new large factories, some of them new plants, are located here and give employment to thousands of people, and the population of the town has largely increased, but the increase in taxable wealth resulting from the location of the factories here has not been large, and it cannot be disputed that much of the increased population exceeds in expense to the town the return in revenue resulting from it.

These various phases of this important question of increasing the tax ratables of the town were duly considered at the meeting of the Board of Trade's Press Committee, and that committee proposed another experiment in the line of solving the question. The committee's plan will be submitted to other sub-committees of the Board of Trade whose special work is in the line of the Press Committee's propositions and eventually to the Board of Trade as a whole, and if favorably received the experiment will be given a practical trial.

BOARD OF TRADE.

REGULAR QUARTERLY MEETING HELD THURSDAY NIGHT.

A Municipal Building the Chief Topic of Discussion—Chairman Peterson of the Town Council Makes Known the Official Plans.—A More Elaborate Structure Proposed by Members of the Board.

The regular quarterly meeting of the Board of Trade was held Thursday night in Essex County Building and Loan Hall. Reports were made by several of the sub committees, notably the Press Committee and the committee on Suburban Homes, of which Mr. Biggart is chairman. This latter report will be treated of more fully later on.

William S. Dodd's resignation as a member of the Executive Committee was received and accepted, and Thomas Mc- Gowan elected to succeed him. Mr. Dodd's resignation was due to absence from town. He still retains his membership in the Board. James H. Moore, of the Membership Committee, reported fifteen new applications for membership. Dr. Cornelison submitted the report of the Executive Committee and offered an amendment to the constitution making the Treasurer of the Board a member of the Executive Committee. President Stephen called attention to the section in the by-laws relating to delinquent members and their right to vote and said it would be enforced. Treasurer Charles E. Underwood reported a balance of \$75 in the treasury of the Board and all bills paid. The matter of flagstone sidewalks, now a subject of discussion, was reported to a committee for investigation. David G. Garabrant introduced for discussion the subject of a municipal building. Mr. Garabrant said that some time ago a plan for a municipal building had been prepared by an architect and the cost given was \$30,000. He cited the different amounts now paid out by the town in rents and repairs and thought that a municipal building accommodating all the town offices, the companies of the fire department and the police department could be maintained at a less cost. Mr. Garabrant said that the building proposed some time ago made provision for some revenue from rentals from parts of it not needed by the town. He was of the opinion that the interest charges and the sinking fund charges of bonds issued for the purpose of erecting a municipal building would not be more than the town now paid out in rentals and repairs. In replying to a question as to the cost of janitor's services and other maintenance expenses Mr. Garabrant quoted the sums now paid out for janitors, coal and other expenses in the several buildings now rented by the year.

Chairman George Peterson, of the Town Council, informed the Board of the plans now under consideration by the Council for a municipal building. These plans he said provided for an issue of bonds to the amount of \$25,000. The Council has under consideration provided for the purchase of a plot of ground on Washington Avenue, in the rear of the Coal and Supply Company's office, where it was proposed to erect a brick building with stone trimmings the building and land to cost about \$23,000, and with the extra money a house house at Watersees would be purchased.

In describing the proposed building Mr. Peterson said it would accommodate all the town offices, Essex Truck Company and Phoenix Hose Company, and the Police Department. The plans called for a structural steel bell tower which would be inclosed and used for a hose-drying tower.

Mr. Quinn objected to the location for a municipal building contemplated by the Council. His choice was the Nash property at the junction of Broad and Franklin Streets. Mr. Quinn thought that more than the mere question of utility should enter into any project for a municipal building.

Mr. Peterson admitted that Mr. Quinn's remarks were all true enough but the Council had to give first consideration to the existing financial condition of the town. Personally he preferred to have a \$50,000 town building located on the choicest spot in the town, but the town was in no position for any such expenditure. The Council he said was now compelled to make provision for the fire houses, and while ten or more thousand dollars was to be expended for that purpose an additional \$10,000 would meet all other requirements. The Washington Avenue site, Mr. Peterson said, was particularly well adapted for the location of the fire companies.

Mr. Garabrant was of the same opinion as Mr. Quinn with respect to a site for a municipal building. He considered the erection of such a structure as something worth doing well even if it cost \$50,000. The project should be carried out in such a measure as to occasion no cause for regret. He feared that if the plans under consideration by the Council were carried out there would be a feeling of disappointment among the people and it would afterward be said that a mistake had been made. The Nash prop-

erty, in his estimation, admirably filled all the requirements as a site for a municipal building.

Mr. Coulain said that one important point that had influenced the Council in the selection of the Washington Avenue site was the matter of procuring horses for fire purposes. He said that if the building was so situated that the town would be compelled to own horses the fire appropriation would have to be trebled.

The matter of a municipal building was referred to a committee for investigation and report and that committee is authorized to call a special meeting of the Board of Trade to hear its report.

Firemen's Banquet

The twentieth annual meeting and banquet of Essex Hook and Ladder Company, the pioneer among the volunteer fire companies in this town, took place on Tuesday, the meeting at the Truck House and the banquet at the American House. The election of officers for the ensuing year resulted as follows:

President, William L. Johnson; Vice-President, Seymour P. Gilbert; Secretary and Clerk, J. Adolph Welmar; Treasurer, Charles H. Johnson; Chaplain, the Rev. Edwin A. White; Trustees, Charles J. Hildebrandt, Albert Lopacker, Chas. A. Harrington and Frank H. Baker; Foreman, Frank N. Unangst; Assistant Foreman, Charles H. Stagg.

At the banquet in the American House covers were laid for thirty-five. President William L. Johnson was in the chair and delivered an address of welcome, after which the Rev. Edwin A. White, the chaplain, invoked a blessing. After Foreman Frank N. Unangst had read his fourth annual report speeches were made by Councilmen George Peterson, John R. Coulant and Charles W. Chatob, former Chief Engineer William U. Oakes, Seymour P. Gilbert and Charles H. Ashley. Professor John F. Dillon and the Essex Quartette sang. A string orchestra furnished music under the leadership of Professor Wm. J. Maier. The guests were Councilmen Peterson, Chatob and Coulant, William U. Oakes, Joseph H. Tryon, George S. Bedford and the Rev. Edwin A. White. The menu was as follows:

MEN	
Cocktail Martinis.	
Creamed clams for the	
Steamed hard and soft shell clams.	
Why not sauce.	
Soft shell crab on toast.	
Roast filet of beef.	Mushroom sauce.
Fried chicken Maryland style.	
Asparagus, creamed or Newport	
Chowders.	New England.
New Peas.	Sweet Tomatoes.
Oysters.	Mixed Pickles.
Chow chow.	Worcestershire sauce.
Orange juice.	Apple sauce.
Bananas.	Imperial nuts.
Oranges.	Black bread.
Black bread.	Cheese.
Wines.	Cigars.

Foreman Frank N. Unangst read his annual report, in which he stated that the company had responded to twenty-six alarms during the year, none of which was of importance. The majority of the members, the foreman said, have been prompt in responding to calls and have done good and effective work. This is especially true, he said, of one new member. "The usual custom of decorating the graves of our deceased members on Memorial Day was duly observed. Our financial condition, as shown by Treasurer Johnson's report, is excellent. Our trip to Old Point Comfort was a memorable one and the members of the company are anticipating another similar excursion. The company's quarters are in a most deplorable condition, growing worse as time goes by, but we are promised better things in the near future by those in authority, and visions of a new and substantial fire house with all modern improvements now arise before us."

Foreman Unangst was in command at seventeen fires. Assistant Foreman Stagg at eight, and Fireman Van Sant at one. The company performed fifteen hours of fire duty during the year.

The percentage of fire duty of each member of the company was as follows: Lewis Dawkins, 50 percent.; S. P. Gilbert 59, Thomas F. Hays 32, Wm. L. Johnson 73, Charles Ashley 69, C. H. Johnson 23, George W. Cadmus 42, N. Van Sant 34, F. N. Unangst 73, C. P. Linder 15, W. F. Harrison 23, Frank H. Baker 35, J. A. Welmar 34, C. H. Hildebrandt 57, A. Lopacker 84, B. M. Deckert 31, C. A. Harrington 55.

School Work Exhibit

An exhibit of the work from all the different schools of the town will be held in the High School building on the 16th, 17th, and 18th of June. On the 16th and 17th the exhibit will be open in the evening.

Against Annexation.

"Montclair as it was, as it is, and as it should be" was the topic of a sermon suggested by the thirty-third anniversary of the organization of the First Congregational Church of that place, and preached Sunday morning by the pastor, Rev. Dr. Amory H. Bradford, before a large congregation.

"I can find no more satisfactory starting point for my sermon on the day when we pass from the first to the second generation of our history," Dr. Bradford began, "than the vision of the Holy City, for what Jerusalem was to the Jews our own beautiful city should be to all of us, and what the ancient church should have made that city this church should help in making this city."

The prophet looked both backward and forward, backward only that he might thrill the people with the fairer visions of the future. In like manner we will think of what has been and what is to come to our city, which shall be established in righteousness.

"Thirty-three years ago last Friday,

reckoning by days of the month, and today, reckoning by days of the week, the first public services of this church were held. The membership of this church at that time was eighty-four, at the place of worship was a little cabin, up two flights of stairs, on the south side of Bloomfield Avenue, about one hundred feet east of the corner of Fullerton Avenue. In that building we worshipped for about three years, while this edifice, as originally erected, was in process of construction. And what of the Montclair of that day?

"Consider, first, what it did not have.

It had no Green Brook and Lake Railroad, no water supply, no light roads, no lights in the streets, no gas, no lanterns in those days—no gas, no sewers, no electric lights, no alleys, no police force, no hospital, no children's Home, no Young Men's Christian Association, no Montclair Club. There is no Upper Montclair, only a few houses, called Speartown, no Fullerton Avenue (North), no Plymouth Street, no Crescent Street, no Clinton Avenue, no Main Avenue, no Upper Mountain Avenue, no Highland Avenue, no Union Street below Fullerton, no Baptist Church, no Trinity Church, no Congregational Church—indeed, there was only a little village of about fifteen hundred people, as unlike what we see to-day as an acorn is unlike an oak.

"Consider now what Montclair did have.

It had the First Presbyterian Church as it is today, without its lecture-room. What is now the High School gymnasium was St. Luke's Church; the Methodist Church was on Bloomfield Avenue in what is now the colored St. Mark's M. E. Church. The Roman Catholic Church was in Washington Street. Bloomfield Avenue then was a turnpike with a tollgate on the top of the mountain, near the Mountain House. In those days we took the cars from New York to Newark, and then changed into diminutive boxes, dangerous for tall men or for short men with silk hats, and these were drawn by a sleepy locomotive to Montclair. The railway stations, both here and at Hoboken, were little better than cattle sheds.

"In these days Montclair consisted chiefly of a beautiful landscape and a small group of the noblest and most enterprising young people who ever settled in any community. Social conditions at that time were somewhat peculiar. Society was distinctly divided between natives and suburbanites, who were all supposed to be aristocrats. The former had the land, and the latter had the vision and public spirit, although when I remember what price some of the old residents expected for their land it is evident that they had faith if not vision. There was an irrepressible conflict for years between the natives and the suburbanites, but even the echoes of the strife have now died away.

"In those days the right to grant licenses was in the court in Newark. When our population was but 5,000 there were twenty-eight licenses for the sale of liquors, and drunkenness and gambling were so common as to be a nuisance; but now that we have home rule there are but eleven licenses all told, the law is well executed, and drunkenness is seldom seen in our streets.

"Does the glamour of youth still surround my legs, or am I correct in thinking that few cities have had such noble and public-spirited citizens when its institutions were in the formative period? Here were broad-minded, liberal-hearted, enthusiastic men and women; many had fine culture, most of them either directly or indirectly came from New England, and they set themselves to the task of founding here a Christian city with all the enthusiasm that distinguished our Pilgrim Fathers when they laid the foundations of our American institutions at Plymouth.

"The future depends on the vision and fidelity of those now living. Are we to retain our characteristics or to be swallowed up in a larger city? Are we to maintain our autonomy, or are absentee plutocrats, trolley magnates, brewers and liquor-dealers to compel us to become a part of Newark in furtherance of their selfish schemes?

Shall we not continue to furnish schools for all without regard to creed, color or nationality, and thus help to make a wiser and a better nation? Shall we not still more rigidly limit the traffic

in intoxicating liquors? Are we to remain a God-fearing Christian people, not bigoted, but liberal, truth loving, consecrated and zealous in our purpose to make Montclair a part of the city of God?

"Surely the children of such men as those who laid the foundation of our municipal life will not be unworthy of their ancestry. But there are dangers in our path, and I ask you to consider a few of them. The chief sources of peril to our community are four.

"First, there is danger that outside corporations, like the trolley, water and lighting companies, may act as if we have no rights which they are bound to respect. They are doing so already in the way they are stringing their wires and treating our people to dirty and stationary instead of clean and moving cars.

"Second, there is the likelihood that selfishness will keep constantly on the watch to combine us with Newark—that we shall thus become a mere annex to a larger municipality—an annex whose money shall be spent by the political rascals who infest the city halls of most large cities.

"Third, there is danger that we may be swamped by foreigners, and thus the whole character of our life changed; and

"Fourth, there is the still more insidious peril that with the increase of wealth there may follow less sensitive consciences and the lowering of moral ideals.

"Concerning these perils, I have somewhat to say.

"First, we ought to cultivate the habit of knowing well the community in which we live. Do you know how Montclair is growing? Do you know whether there are few or many open spaces where the children of the poor can play? Do you know how laws are enforced? Do you know whether there is need of a larger hospital? Do you know the city in which you live—which makes the environment for your family—as you know your business?

Cultivate the habit of knowing Montclair—keep in touch with its various forms of life—it will make you more accurate in your judgments and wiser in your actions.

"Second, we should be on our guard in season and out of season, that we be not surprised by some scheme for annexation to Newark. Now I have no objection to Newark. Among manufacturing cities it is unsurpassed for public spirit and good order; but its ideals are not ours, and its administration is not ours. Newark does not need us and we do not need Newark.

As neighbors we may be friends, but tied together we should be enemies.

No one, unless impelled by personal greed or political ambition, will ever press annexation upon us. He who suggests such a proposition should be suspected and watched at once. He may not be dishonest, but the chances are against him.

"Third, we should also be on our guard against the encroachments of the liquor power. A drunken man is now seldom seen. Crimes of violence are not often reported. What intemperance we do have is chiefly among the well-to-do, who drink in New York and bring suffering to Montclair. We shall need no more licenses for years to come. Limit the saloons, enforce the laws, be total abstainers ourselves—ought to be the watchword of all good citizens of Montclair.

"Fourth, we should re-emphasize the ideals of our Puritan ancestors. I do not say we should be Puritanical, but we should exalt those Puritan principles which make good citizenship a part of religion, which honor the Lord's Day and will not allow it to be made a day of unnecessary work or undue levity, which put integrity and virtue above wealth or popularity. Our fathers had iron in their blood; they could not be bought. The best way to honor their memory is by being like them.

"In short, I plead with you that we carry the spirit of Jesus Christ into all that concerns our municipality; that we put Him and His teaching above creeds, parties, pangs for selfish gain. We shall then have a position of commanding and beneficent leadership in this Greater New York of which we are a part, and in this republic which we love so well.

"This church has always recognized its duty to the community. On this day, which begins a new generation of history, we have therefore acted concerning the Montclair which has been, which is, and which should be. I have no prophetic vision, but this I know—if those who live here in the future shall be as loyal to their light, as generous in spirit, as courageous in action as those who were here thirty-three years ago, this hillside for long years to come will be the abode of a people who will trust God, work righteousness, and love one another.

And the words of the prophet shall be as true of our city as of the city which he saw in far-off vision: 'No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue which shall rise against thee in judgment shall thou condemn.'

The future depends on the vision and fidelity of those now living. Are we to retain our characteristics or to be swallowed up in a larger city? Are we to maintain our autonomy, or are absentee plutocrats, trolley magnates, brewers and liquor-dealers to compel us to become a part of Newark in furtherance of their selfish schemes?

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